

Ashes to

Ashes

CHEF FREDRIK BERSELIUS
CHANGES LOCATIONS
WITHOUT LOSING HIS
CELEBRATED TASTE
AS THE MUCH-BELOVED
ASKA RISES AGAIN.

Photographs by Sharif Hamza
Styled by Bill Mullen

THEORY leather aviator jacket,
\$2495, cotton sweater, \$345,
and cotton trousers, \$245.



ATM ANTHONY THOMAS MELILLO
nylon-blend hooded jacket,
\$795, cotton turtleneck, \$225,
and wool trousers, \$395.

FREDRIK BERSELIUS OPENED Aska, his Michelin-starred Brooklyn outpost serving Nordic cuisine, in 2012. Propelled by local chatter and critical praise, the restaurant, tucked in the back of Williamsburg's Kinfolk Studios, flourished. New Yorkers were lining up for a taste of Berselius's *boudin noir*, pheasant, or snails served alongside exotic vegetables such as salsify and lichen—plated into sensitive, Miró-like compositions. By 2014, the Swedish-born chef had outgrown the space and surprised everyone by closing the restaurant. “It was meant to be a swift move to a new location,” Berselius says. But it didn't happen that way. After more than two years of leases falling through and permits all but signed, Berselius opened his new restaurant and bar, also named Aska (Swedish for “ashes”), this past June on South Fifth Street at Williamsburg's southern edge.

For Berselius, 37, the need for a larger space had less to do with turning over more diners than it did with offering the type of atmosphere where he would enjoy eating. Past the dining room with ten or so tables—roughly the same number as the old Aska—is a back yard where guests have access to drinks and a smaller, more snackable menu. Downstairs is a bar, which Berselius describes as “a living room with nice beers and nice wine. A place to chill out on your way home or meet up with friends.”

Similar to how he might compose his award-winning dishes, Berselius thoughtfully considered every ingredient when building out Aska's new venue. “I wanted to make a place where everything has a meaning, a thought behind

it,” he says. “From food, plates, and wine glasses to furniture, lighting, and music, even to the staff and what they wear, nothing should be an afterthought.” For his part, Berselius dresses like his food—simple with high-quality ingredients. “I end up wearing black jeans and black T-shirts,” he says. “I can wear my black desert boots, which I have several pairs of. That's what I wear every day.”

Berselius's style of cooking relies heavily on fresh and foraged ingredients. He continues to visit the same local farmer's market he's always sourced produce from but has added new vendors and growers to diversify and strengthen his flavors, all while keeping the spirit of his menu largely the same. “We have a family house three hours north in the western Catskills where we try to grow stuff ourselves,” he says. “Basically it's a place up in the middle of nowhere. I love it.” Back in April, Berselius traveled to the region, just as the ground was thawing, to see what could be harvested in the summer and served in the restaurant. “I brought up a chef and a sous chef to see what was growing out there in the wild and to see the farmers we know to talk about how we can work together and what they can grow for us,” he says.

Upon his return to the city, Berselius was finally ready to open the revamped Aska. It was the most nerve-racking moment of his career. Dressed in black and with knife in hand, he waited in crouch position, wondering if, after two years, people would remember him and his food. He needn't have worried; food like his is impossible to forget.

BY MICKEY STANLEY

PS BY PAUL SMITH wool
topcoat, \$675, mohair
sweater, \$295, and wool
jogging trousers, \$325;
COMMON PROJECTS leather
lace-up shoes, \$525.

“I wanted to make a
place where everything
has a meaning, a
thought behind it.”



JOHN VARVATOS wool cardigan,
\$998, silk and cashmere
Henley, \$398, cotton jeans,
\$298, and leather lace-up
boots, \$700.

VINCE wool shirt jacket,
\$395, wool and cashmere
turtleneck, \$275, and
poly-blend trousers, \$225.

